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ABSTRACT

This handbook has been developed to offer guidelines and suggestions to volunteers in mentoring programs to help them strengthen the mentoring relationship. The program for which the handbook was designed, the Mentor/Tutor Network in Madison, Wisconsin, has evolved into a comprehensive support system for schools to collaborate with community groups to pair adult volunteers with struggling students. The topics covered in this guide include: (1) history of the mentoring program; (2) expectations for mentors; (3) what students say; (4) what mentors say; (5) ideas for outings; (6) when you are an adult friend of a struggling student; (7) helpful hints for mentors; (8) steps toward positive interaction with youth; (9) discussion of students with needs for extra support; (10) considerations in mentoring students from different backgrounds; (11) the importance of listening; (12) tips for those mentoring Southeast Asian youth; and (13) characteristics of gifted and talented students. A mentor's agreement is included. (Contains 19 resources.) (SLD)

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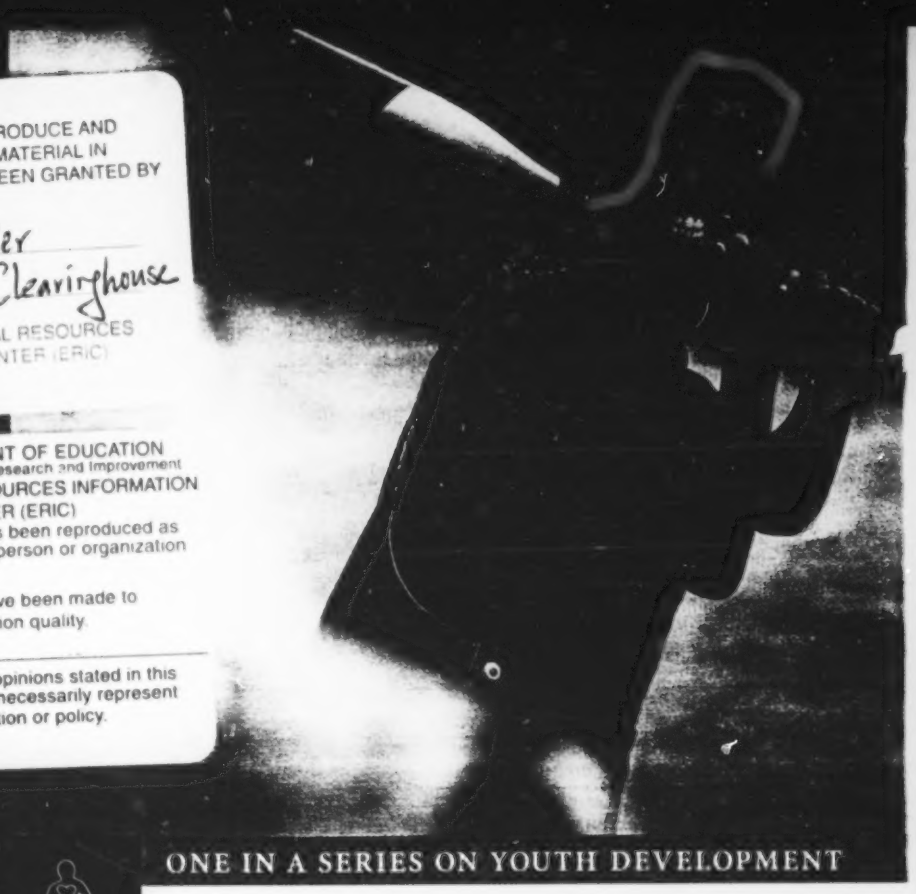

ONE IN A SERIES ON YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

mentor's guide

BY

SHIRLEY D. HAMMOND, M.ED.

WISCONSIN CLEARINGHOUSE

the mentor's guide

by

Shirley D. Hammond, M.Ed.

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"A hundred years from now it will not matter what my bank account was, the sort of house I lived in, or the kind of car I drove. But the world may be different because I was important in the life of a child."

MARY FUTRELL, NATIONAL EDUCATION ASSOCIATION

"Children have never been good at listening to their elders, but they never fail to imitate them."

JAMES BALDWIN

"Where you come from does not determine where you're going; it only determines where you are beginning."

MYCHAL WYNN, EMPOWERING AFRICAN AMERICAN MALES TO SUCCEED

"How do we hand to another generation the virtues of civility and thoughtfulness toward others — virtues such as compassion, honor, truthfulness, worship, finding ideals larger than self?"

ROBERT COLES, THE CALL OF SERVICE

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OUR MOTTO:

We are going to keep believing in these children until they can start believing in themselves.

Welcome to the mentor team.

Dear Mentor:

Congratulations! You've officially decided to befriend and mentor a student; hopefully, you're already finding that you and your new friend share some common interests and are making plans to spend quality time together. I developed this handbook to offer you guidelines and suggestions to strengthen your new friendship, keep it alive, and help it grow.

A mentoring relationship can be challenging, especially in its early stages. Some youth need time to adjust to a person who is fun and affirming with them because it is a new experience — your student will need to learn to trust you. It sometimes takes several meetings for the ice to break, so don't get discouraged if you struggle a bit at first. Just keep on being positive. When making conversation with your student, discuss the things you are doing and seeing on your outings together; try not to talk about school and other parts of the student's personal life, for this can sometimes be uncomfortable. For the most part, it's hard to get feedback from young people, but your challenge is to keep working even when unsure whether you're making progress. I didn't remember to thank my parents for putting up with me in my teen years until I was 35!

You are a role model of stability, kindness, and hope. As a mentor, you need to be dedicated, resourceful, and faithful to your mission. You may or may not choose to tutor your student. One of the best ways to prove your effectiveness is to help your student develop self-confidence, improve school attendance, relate more positively to

adults, and broaden his or her life experiences. Results don't always come quickly—you need to be patient and loving, no matter what circumstances you face.

The guidelines included in this booklet are important; they will help you in your new mentoring relationship. If you need guidance or support along the way, work with your program coordinator. Watch for reminders about mentor support meetings and especially mentor/student social gatherings. These are the times when you'll feel part of a larger program, when you'll be able to see others who are also involved in this very important mission. A community of support will help you keep your eyes on the long-term goal—to ensure that this young person graduates from high school and becomes a productive citizen.

Best of luck to you in your new mentoring relationship. I am very grateful for people like you. Any suggestions you have for this booklet are welcome and can be directed to me in care of the publisher.

Sincerely,
Shirley Hammond
Madison, Wisconsin

HISTORY OF THE MENTOR/TUTOR NETWORK

The Mentor/Tutor Network in Madison, Wisconsin has evolved into a comprehensive support system for schools to collaborate with community groups to pair caring adult volunteers with struggling students. In 1989-90, Christ Presbyterian and Union Tabernacle churches in Madison entered into partnership to befriend 16 high-need, disadvantaged youth involved in Project Opportunity of the Madison Community Foundation. Volunteers from both congregations followed these students from sixth grade through high school graduation. During those years, Shirley Hammond, M.Ed., devel-

oped Madison's mentor/student program along with Carrie Bernhardt, Lilada Gee-Lewis, and Juan Lopez. The program continues to grow, with more and more community volunteers joining with the schools to encourage success for all students.

Requests for assistance in starting similar partnership programs came from many schools, churches, and organizations not only in Wisconsin, but throughout the country. Ms. Hammond wrote *The Mentor's Guide* and *The Mentor Program Handbook** to meet the needs of the requesting communities. The Mentor/Tutor Network was established in 1991 to facilitate program efforts in Dane County, Wisconsin. Madison Urban Ministry and Oscar Mayer Foods have given support to the Mentor/Tutor Network. In 1995, the Madison Metropolitan School District adopted *The Mentor's Guide* and *The Mentor Program Handbook* for use in all city schools. At that time, Ms. Hammond joined the District as Consultant for Mentoring/Tutoring in the Department of Equity, Diversity and Advocacy, where today she enjoys planning citywide trainings for the ever-increasing number of community volunteer mentors.

EXPECTATIONS FOR MENTORS

- Appreciate the student for the person he or she is right now; always respect the student's feelings.
- Make a regular, weekly contact with the student, and arrange reasonable times to be with the student. In one month, you might schedule a lunch on a school day during the first week, an outing in the second week, a phone call sometime the third week, and a second outing during the final week.

* *The Mentor Program Handbook* is published by and available from the Wisconsin Clearinghouse for Prevention Resources. Please call 800-322-1468 for ordering information.

- Avoid imposing your expectations of success on the student. There will probably be small successes that deserve praise, rather than huge strides.
- Gently encourage any personal growth that is needed. Model good manners, keeping appointments and returning calls, rather than demanding standards the student may not be able to understand or meet.
- Help and assist the student (and family, where possible) to access community resources.
- Be sensitive to and affirm cultural identity, if appropriate.
- Help the student to learn to take responsibility for his or her own future.
- Listen to what is *not* being said.
- Maintain a safe environment during all outings and scheduled activities.
- Attend your mentor orientation, support meetings, and student/mentor gatherings.
- Keep the mentor program coordinators informed of problems or progress in your friendship with the student.
- Establish a friendly relationship with the student's parent(s) and support their role in the child's life.

"I see a pattern running through the pattern of white privilege, a pattern of assumptions which are passed on to me as a white person. There is one piece of cultural turf and I am among those who control the turf. My skin color is an asset for any move I am educated to make. I can think of myself as belonging in major ways and make social systems work for me. I can disparage, fear, neglect and be oblivious to anything outside my cultural norm. But, as I am made confident, comfortable and included, other groups are being made unconfident, uncomfortable and excluded."

PEGGY MCINTOSH*

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students say...

"Even though we have gone fishing, to baseball games, and a parade, the most fun I've had with my mentor is walking in the park and talking."

–Bobby (has no father or grandfather; his mentor is 73 years old)

"I go to my mentor's house after school. We bake cookies, work on her computer, play with her toddler and her dog. She is helping me to sew a jumper, too."

–Doreen (lives with a single father who works two jobs)

"Having a mentor is having a best friend."

–Mao (Cambodian girl whose mentor has helped her family to interpret American culture)

"I go to my mentor's office after school sometimes to do my homework. It is a pretty and quiet place to study."

–Monica (lives with ten relatives in a two-bedroom apartment)

mentors say...

"As a mentor, your greatest assets are your ears . . . listen, listen, listen!"

–Anne DeWitt

"You get back much more than you give. It is a great investment."

–Madalyn Scheer (walks with two canes, but has "adventures" with her student)

"I don't spend much money. Sometimes we just ride around and talk. Mainly, I try to give the boy the fun that is missing in his life. I grew up poor, too, but now I'm working on a Ph.D."

–Ruben Anthony

"My boy lives with a single deaf mother and his two-year-old sister. My wife and I noticed the little girl was learning sign language, but was not speaking, so we took some children's books to read to her to demonstrate to her older brother that he must help his little sister to learn words. We also got him a library card so he has access to books."

–Gervase Zanotti

"Having a child along gives me an excuse to do things I wouldn't ordinarily do… I have even learned to play video games!"

–Retired Attorney

IDEAS FOR OUTINGS

Following is a list of ideas to get you started as you and your student begin to spend time together. This list is only a starting point; the opportunities for outings are endless—you'll never be at a loss for things to do with the student if you use imagination and are willing to try new things. Remember, though, what you do together matters little compared to the relationship you are building over time.

Some ideas for outings . . .

- Go out to eat during the week, either during the lunch period or in the evening. Call the school the day before to arrange for lunch on a school day.
- Attend high school and university events, such as athletic games, plays, concerts, art exhibits, etc.
- Take a ride in the country, and show the student how to read a map. Drive around your town or a nearby town, and point out landmarks and areas of interest. Go to a nearby lookout point and admire the view.
- Visit a nearby airport and show the student where to buy tickets, how to read a monitor, how to go through security checkpoints, etc.
- Sit at a sidewalk cafe or near the window in a coffee shop and watch people as they pass by you.
- Browse a local farmer's market and discuss the many different kinds of produce available.
- Take a city bus or train ride along one or more routes. Get a route map and follow along as you make the various stops.
- Do a good deed. Rake leaves or shovel snow for an ill or elderly person. Help someone do repairs or move to a new place. Bake

cookies or make a birthday cake for a family member. Spend an afternoon working at a soup kitchen.

- Make something together: model cars or planes, a bird house, jewelry, ornaments, gifts, a stuffed animal, a kite. Cook a meal and sit down to eat together. Share some of your talents and skills, and encourage the student to share his or her skills. Together, you might learn a few things, such as how to use a typewriter or computer, a camera, or a washer and dryer.
- Picnic at a nearby lake, zoo, or park. Hike, bike, play Frisbee, skip stones, fish, watch a sunset, identify birds.
- Play miniature golf, ping pong, board games. Go swimming at a local pool; go bowling or roller skating; go to a movie and discuss it afterward; go window shopping.
- Utilize programs sponsored by the local library, museums, or a nearby college or university—as much as possible, make sure that the programs appeal to your student.
- Watch YMCA/YWCA programs and sports leagues for the right opportunity to improve or learn a skill that interests the student.

WHEN YOU ARE AN ADULT FRIEND OF A STRUGGLING STUDENT

Be a Learner: As you mentor a student, you may acquire some insights that will help you to see the world from a different point of view. Your young friend may have a lot to teach you, so be open and willing to learn from him or her.

Be Trustworthy: Always keep appointments, confidences, and promises. There may not be trusting relationships in your student's life.

Be Yourself: There may be a way to incorporate the student into a hobby, recreational activity, craft class, or a service activity that you already do. Can you take your student to lunch once a week? Arrangements could be made over lunch for the student to join you in your regular activities.

Be Patient: All friendships take time to grow.

Be an Advisor: In very small doses and only after you have earned the right to speak, you might be asked an opinion about friends, home, or school situations. Remember that values differ from person to person. What you are speaks much louder than what you say.

Be an Encourager: Really listen to your friend if he or she cares to share thoughts or fears with you. Never criticize the student's home or parent(s). Affirm positive choices the child may be making. Help your student to discover and develop gifts and talents if appropriate.

Be a Bridge to New Experiences: Some youth rarely leave their own neighborhoods. Exploring your area—going bowling, for a ride in the country, out to eat, or to a zoo, library, or museum—may open your student's eyes to a wider world.

HELPFUL HINTS FOR MENTORS

- Follow the procedures of the student's school and home.
- Affirm positive choices the youth may be making. Do not lecture a student on the dangers of what he or she has done wrong. Instead, focus on the child's accomplishments, and point out his or her strengths and talents.

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- Seek the aid of the school/mentor coordinator or the community coordinator in cases of serious problems. Remember, you are *not* responsible for your student's family.
- Don't loan or give money to your student. Help the student by suggesting ways for him or her to earn what is requested.
- Avoid giving medication to the child.
- Don't be too "thin-skinned." The student you mentor may display a rough exterior, but inside there may be a very frightened child who has never had many of the things that you might take for granted.
- Always remember that you are the adult. Young people rarely feel comfortable taking the initiative in conversation with older people or in making calls to them.
- Remember that values differ. It's important to keep an open mind, and often it's better to demonstrate rather than instruct. Don't worry about the little things; instead, focus on the "big picture" and the ultimate goals of the child.
- In cases of real need, you may want to give help with school supplies, shoes, clothing. If that can be done tactfully and with the parents' consent, do what you can. Or, you may arrange for the school to give the things you provide anonymously to keep the relationship clear of expectations. Holiday and birthday gifts are, of course, an exception.
- Include the youth in something you already do to avoid adding one more thing to a busy schedule. Take your student to lunch on a school day—this is a prized appointment, since going out for lunch is unusual for most students.

- Respect the religious doctrines or beliefs of the student's home. Take the youth to your place of worship only if the parents agree that this will be part of your relationship.
- Open a window to adult responsibility. Some youth live in an unrealistic dream world. Show them your workplace and how to make a budget; talk about current events and take them with you to vote.
- Seek opportunities to learn about the family's cultural heritage and the language used in the student's home.
- Don't expect immediate solutions to long-term problems.

STEPS TOWARD POSITIVE INTERACTION WITH YOUTH

When working with people of any age, especially youth, we are encouraged to interact with them in the most positive of ways. The key to positive interaction is simple: listen. Listen to what the young person has to say. Show your student that you respect him or her by carefully listening to his or her dreams, complaints, everyday stories, and worries.

Another aspect of positive interaction is *accepting* the student "as is." Instead of trying to convince a young person who may be struggling with difficult challenges to see various situations as we see them, we instead must learn to accept the unique, individual outlook of that person. Only by accepting the choices made by the student, and passing neither positive nor negative judgment, can we achieve better understanding with the youth and develop a successful relationship.

Following are some suggested steps toward positive interaction with young people:

- *Ignore the small things.* Focus your attention and approval on the good behavior of a student. Catch your student being good!
- *Establish eye contact* and nod or agree with the good points made by the student in conversation.
- *Include the student* in the planning of activities so that he or she can refuse if it is something out of the comfort zone.
- Remember that *short-term goals are most effective* once you begin to agree on small "contracts." ("We'll go to a basketball game next weekend if you are in school every day this week.")
- *Notice things* that make the youth attractive. ("That color looks nice with your dark hair.")
- *Count to ten* if aggressive behavior occurs or manners aren't acceptable. Lead by example.
- Remember that *feelings are legitimate and understandable,* but misbehavior is not allowed (e.g., hitting, swearing, destructiveness). Explain the difference between feelings and behavior. Feelings are okay (even anger), but everyone must learn to act appropriately no matter how they feel. Help the student to express feelings verbally.
- Offer thoughtful advice *only when the student asks for it.* Unsolicited advice could be seen by the student as an attempt to change him or her, and it could hurt your relationship.

STUDENTS IN NEED OF EXTRA SUPPORT MAY BE . . .

- delayed academically and wanting assistance
- in need of a positive role model
- emotionally needy and requiring individual attention
- at risk for making poor social choices
- from low-income families
- limited in experience outside the school setting
- exhibiting poor social behavior
- experiencing family problems (death, divorce, abuse, neglect, illness)
- needing a bridge between two cultures
- wanting an adult to share expertise in a particular field
- having low aspirations and in need of confidence building
- asking for an adult friend to share activities
- losing hope for a successful future
- moving from school to school
- failing to appreciate the value of education

CONSIDERATIONS FOR THOSE WHO MENTOR STUDENTS FROM DIFFERENT BACKGROUNDS

While the ideal mentor/student relationship is between adults and youth from the same or similar racial and ethnic backgrounds, often mentors find themselves working with youth from backgrounds very different from their own. The following considerations

please, just listen

When I ask you to listen to me and you start giving advice,
you have not done what I asked.

When I ask you to listen to me and you begin to tell me
why I shouldn't feel that way,
you are trampling my feelings.

When I ask you to listen to me and you feel you have to
do something to solve my problem,
you have failed me, strange as that may seem.

Listen! All I asked was that you listen,
not talk, or do . . . just hear.

Advice is cheap: twenty cents will get you both
Dear Abby and Billy Graham in the same newspaper.

And I can do for myself. I'm not helpless.
Maybe discouraged and faltering, but not helpless.

When you do something for me that I can and need
to do for myself, you contribute to my fear and inadequacy.

But when you accept, as a simple fact, that I do feel,
no matter how irrational, then I can quit trying to convince you
and get about the business of understanding
what's behind this irrational feeling.

And when that's clear, the answers are obvious
and I don't need advice. Irrational feelings make sense
when we understand what's behind them.

So please listen and just hear me. And if you want
to talk, wait a minute for your turn,
and I'll listen to you.

—RAY HOUGHTON, M.D., BERKELEY, CA
TEEN TIMES, NOV/DEC 1979
FUTURE HOMEMAKERS OF AMERICA

are offered for those who mentor students from a variety of racial and ethnic backgrounds.

As a mentor, you need to realize that:

- the student may have had negative experiences with someone from your ethnic or racial background, including clerks, teachers, officials, or neighbors. You may be watched carefully, to see if you are going to behave the same way.
- the student may not have had a friend from your background before. If you have never before had a friend from a different racial or ethnic background, say so and admit that you have a lot to learn.
- young people of any race do not live organized lives yet. They forget appointments and often don't remember to return phone calls (or they may be too shy). You are the adult.
- you may not feel a need to affirm your ethnicity, but others may need to intentionally affirm their heritage.
- while you can't help the oppression of the past, you can insist on justice for everyone. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. said, "Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere."
- as you intentionally befriend and advocate for this valuable person, you are not simply letting the race problem continue, but are actively trying to participate in the solution.
- you are not a rescuer. Sometimes you will wonder if you are doing any good at all, but you are making memories that may come back at a later date and stage of maturity to set a course toward a productive future.

FOR THOSE WHO MENTOR OR TUTOR SOUTHEAST ASIAN YOUTH

In recent years, a substantial number of refugees from Southeast Asia have settled in cities and towns across the United States. These people need time to adjust as they encounter a new culture, climate, and language. Many have had traumatic experiences and severe personal losses of family members and possessions, escaping for their lives from a homeland they did not want to leave. Often, we simply assume that the customs and culture of most people are similar to our own, but differences in gestures, etiquette, ways of communicating, family life, and personal interaction exist and need to be understood. Though each Southeast Asian country and culture differs to some extent (and no general characteristics can apply to *all* people from a Southeast Asian background), the following characteristics are common generalizations that may be helpful when working with Laotian, Hmong, Cambodian, and Vietnamese peoples.

Basic Family Unit: The basic family unit includes all relatives—grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins—living in close proximity. A senior male is charged with upholding traditions and enforcing standards for all. A mother cares for the family and maintains unity. Older children take responsibility for younger ones, and all respect elders. Money earned is shared by the household.

Marriage: Marriage is sometimes arranged by the parents for girls between the ages of 14 and 18 and for boys in their twenties. Dating is not allowed, and engaged couples see each other only with chaperones. Public displays of affection are not acceptable, and emotions are subordinate to the needs of the group.

Education: The teacher is a central figure, giving lectures and expecting obedience without question. To challenge a teacher in any way is disrespectful, even in the context of a discussion. Children are

taught compromise, compliance, gentleness, honesty, and patience both at home and at school. Adolescence is a Western phenomenon and not part of Southeast Asian culture, where children are considered adults at age 15.

Religion: Religion is more often polytheistic; Buddhism is the most prevalent religion, although some Southeast Asian people may be Christians. Veneration for ancestors is usual. Many Southeast Asians believe in evil spirits and the use of herbal remedies by a shaman or folk doctor to eliminate them. Death usually takes place at home, with traditional customs observed.

Other Common Practices

- Direct confrontation is avoided through use of a third party.
- Shaking hands is acceptable for men but not for women.
- Pointing a finger or foot at someone is rude. Extending the hand with fingers downward and "fluttering" them is the accepted way to summon a person.
- Comparing a person to an animal is insulting.
- Touching the head, where the spirit resides, is forbidden.
- Showing hospitality and kindness to strangers is expected.
- Opening gifts in the presence of the giver is impolite.

characteristics of gifted/ talented students

POSITIVE TRAITS	NEGATIVE TRAITS
• Produces many and varied solutions to problems	• Often will not follow methods that are taught to solve problems
• Flexible, can work out of confusion	• Can be impatient, dislikes details or restrictions
• Original and imaginative	• Is capable of fantasy, daydreams
• Uses imagination and fantasy in solving personal and universal problems	• May be considered by peers and teachers as "wild," "weird," "silly"
• Keen sense of humor, may see humor in situations when others do not	• May make jokes at inappropriate times
• Takes risks when trying out original ideas, does not fear being "different"	• May be viewed as unrealistic, "crazy," or too aggressive
• Uninhibited in expressing feelings/opinions	• May argue with peers, parents, and teachers
• Prefers to work independently	• May be highly individualistic and seem stubborn
• Intensely curious about many things	• May interrupt or ignore class activities to pursue interests
• Committed to the task(s) of interest area(s)	• May resist working on tasks he/she is not interested in; may become bored with routine and repetitive tasks

mentor's agreement

AS A MENTOR, I AGREE TO:

- arrange for reasonable times to meet with my student;
- help my student in whatever way is most appropriate;
- maintain a safe environment during all activities;
- attend orientation, support meetings, and mentor/student gatherings as often as I can;
- establish a friendly relationship with the student's parent(s) and support their role in the child's life;
- keep the coordinators informed of problems and/or progress in the friendship and let them know if I wish to be reassigned or continue as a mentor at the end of the year.

the starfish flinger

As the old man walked the beach at dawn,
he noticed a young man ahead of him
picking up starfish and
flinging them into the sea.
Finally catching up with the youth,
he asked him why he was doing this.
The answer was that the stranded starfish would die
if left until the morning sun.

"But the beach goes on for miles
and there are millions of starfish,"
countered the other.

"How can your effort make any difference?"

The young man looked at the starfish in
his hand and then threw it to safety in the waves.

"It makes a difference to this one," he said.

—AUTHOR UNKNOWN

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READING FOR UNDERSTANDING

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